

Executive Summary

Historically, each federally funded employment and training program has been authorized independently to meet particular needs and has established its reporting requirements and related definitions independently. Consequently, related programs collect similar information and define the same terms in substantially *different* ways. At the Federal level, this situation undermines coordinated planning and oversight. However, its effects are most severe at the State and local levels, where it creates costly and time-consuming barriers to the provision of comprehensive services. Federal and State initiatives aimed at the development of integrated service strategies have created a new sense of urgency regarding the need to remove these barriers.

In response to a legislative mandate contained in the 1992 amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act to “identify a core set of consistently defined data elements” for the major Federal employment and training programs, the Department of Labor undertook the Core Data Elements Project. It was joined in this effort by the Departments of Agriculture, Education, and Health and Human Services, and by the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, the General Accounting Office, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the National Governors Association.

A workgroup was formed to look at reporting requirements for Adult Education State Administered Basic Grants, Vocational Education Programs authorized by the Carl Perkins Act, the Employment Service, JTPA Titles II and III, Job Corps, JOBS, and the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program. The workgroup began by identifying data elements that were common to two or more programs and by compiling related definitions. Based on the common elements, a recommended set of core data elements was identified. Common definitions of the terms used in the core data elements were also developed. The recommended core data elements and common definitions are presented in this report.

The benefits offered by establishing core data elements and common definitions across programs are substantial. They include:

- Removal of identified barriers to coordination and integration of services across employment and training programs at the State and local levels
- Enhancement of program planning and oversight capability at the Federal, State, and local levels
- Facilitation of integrated client tracking and referral systems
- 0 Removal of barriers to efficient customer service

Therefore, the Core Data Elements Project Workgroup recommends that the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor adopt the core data elements and common definitions for use in their programs. Specifically, the Workgroup recommends that, if a participating program collects information on a topic covered by a core data element, it do so in a

way that is consistent with the element and its common definition. That is, insofar as the agencies require reporting of information on subjects that are covered by the core data elements, the corresponding core data elements and common definitions should be used. It is recommended that changes in current reporting requirements be made in the course of each program's normal process for reviewing and updating its information systems.

In addition, the Workgroup recognizes that the need for consistent definitions goes beyond reported data. They urge the participating agencies to continue to collaborate on the development of common definitions for key program terms, expanding their efforts to encompass additional program areas.